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STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

At the 3882nd meeting of the Security Council, held on 20 May 1998, in connection with the Council's consideration of the item entitled "The situation in Sierra Leone", the President of the Security Council made the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council condemns as gross violations of international humanitarian law the recent atrocities carried out against the civilian population, particularly women and children, of Sierra Leone by members of the Revolutionary United Front and the deposed military junta including widespread rape, mutilation, and slaughter. It calls for an immediate end to all violence against civilians. The Council, in this regard, expresses grave concern about reports of military support being provided to the rebels. It calls on all States to observe strictly the provisions of resolution 1132 (1997) and to avoid any action that might further destabilize the situation in Sierra Leone.

"The Security Council deplores the continued resistance to the authority of the legitimate Government of Sierra Leone and calls on all rebels to cease their resistance, lay down their arms, and surrender to forces of the Military Observer Group (ECOMOG) of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) immediately. It again commends ECOWAS and ECOMOG for the important role they are playing to restore peace and security in Sierra Leone. The Council reiterates its call for States to provide technical and logistical support to assist ECOMOG to continue to enhance its ability to carry out its peacekeeping role and contribute to bringing an end to the atrocities being committed against the people of Sierra Leone.

"The Security Council expresses deep concern for the plight of all those affected by the continuing insecurity, including the tens of thousands of refugees and displaced persons. It urges all those concerned to continue humanitarian assistance and underscores the importance of a comprehensive response by United Nations agencies in coordination with the Government of Sierra Leone and with the support of ECOMOG. The Council also recognizes the important role played by the international community, including the Organization of African Unity and relevant non-governmental

organizations, to provide humanitarian assistance to civilians in dire need in Sierra Leone. The Council commends the Governments of neighbouring countries for their reception of refugees and calls upon all States and relevant international organizations to help them in responding to the refugee crisis.

"The Security Council expresses concern for the safety of all humanitarian personnel working in Sierra Leone. It calls on all parties concerned to facilitate the work of humanitarian agencies. The Council urges the parties to protect displaced persons seeking refuge, as well as United Nations and humanitarian aid workers.

"The Security Council welcomes the efforts made by the democratically elected Government since its return on 10 March 1998 to restore peace and stability and to reestablish effective administration and the democratic process in Sierra Leone. It encourages ECOWAS to renew its political efforts to foster peace and stability and urges all parties in the country to embark on the tasks of national reconstruction, rehabilitation and reconciliation. The Council urges all parties concerned to respect fully international law, including human rights and humanitarian law.

"The Security Council urges States and other parties concerned to contribute to the trust fund to support peacekeeping and related activities in Sierra Leone, and to humanitarian assistance efforts.

"The Security Council requests the Secretary-General to keep it advised on the situation in Sierra Leone.

"The Security Council will remain seized of this matter."